

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 USIE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 MC-02 OMB-01 EB-07 TRSE-00

COME-00 AID-05 IGA-01 ACDA-05 SAM-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01

OPR-01 OC-05 CCO-00 SY-04 USSS-00 SCCT-01 A-01 /089 W
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O R 281400Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7217

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 2853

BANGKOK FOR AMBASSADOR SAXBE

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, IN, PK, US

SUBJECT: INDIAN REACTION TO LIFTING OF US ARMS SALES

EMBARGO

REF: NEW DELHI 2802

SUMMARY: THE GOI CONTINUES TO TRY TO MAINTAIN A POSITION
CAREFULLY BALANCED BETWEEN REACTING STRONGLY ENOUGH TO
SATISFY NATIONALIST OUTRAGE AT OUR LIFTING OF
THE ARMS SALES EMBARGO BUT NOT SO STRONGLY AS TO UNDO THE
PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN INDO-US RELATIONS OVER THE PAST TWO
YEARS. THUS, FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN CALLED THE U. S.

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ACTION "TRAGIC AND REGRETTABLE" YESTERDAY AND SHARPENED

HIS CRITICISM OF BIG POWER IMPERIALIST (READ U.S.)
ACTIVITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. BUT HE SAID INDIA SHOULD
NOT BE "RATTLED" BY THE U. S. ACTION, AND TODAY HE MADE
CLEAR THAT INDIA WANTS TO CONTINUE WITH THE JOINT COM-
MISSION MECHANISM (REFTEL). POLITICIANS AND THE PRESS
FROM THE TWO EXTREMES -- THE COMMUNISTS OR PRO-COMMUNISTS
ON THE LEFT AND THE HINDU NATIONALIST JANA SANGH ON THE RIGHT
-- ARE THE TOUGHEST CRITICS. CENTRIST POLITICIANS, NEWS-
PAPERS AND BUSINESSMEN IN GENERAL EITHER AREN'T TALKING
ABOUT OUR ACTION OR ARE SPEAKING OF IT MORE IN SORROW THAN
IN ANGER. END SUMMARY.

1. GOVERNMENT REACTION: THE GOI CONTINUED ITS CRITICISM
OF THE U. S. DECISION TO RESUME ARMS SALES TO PAKISTAN
THROUGH HIGH-LEVEL PARTICIPATION IN A SEMINAR FEBRUARY 27
ON "THE RISING THREAT OF INTERVENTION IN ASIA AND ITS IMPLI-
CATIONS FOR INDIAN SECURITY." ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS,
FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN TOLD THE ASSEMBLED PARLIAMENTARIANS
AND ACADEMICIANS THAT THE U. S. DECISION REVERSED THE PROCESS
OF NORMALIZATION IN THE SUBCONTINENT AND WAS "TRAGIC AND
REGRETTABLE." BUT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF INDIA BEING
"RATTLED;" HE HAD CONFIDENCE IN THE COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO MEET
THE SITUATION. OTHERWISE HE WOULD NOT ADD TO WHAT HE HAD AL-
READY SAID IN PARLIAMENT WHICH WOULD BE DISCUSSING THE SITUATION
FURTHER.

2. ON THE MORE GENERAL QUESTION OF "INTERVENTION,"
CHAVAN SAID THAT BIG POWER IMPERIALISM SEEMED TO BE BACK
AT ITS "OLD GAME." "THE PRESENT MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE
INDIAN OCEAN IS A SINISTER ONE AND THE THREAT TO THE
SECURITY OF THE LITTORAL STATES HAS NOW BECOME REAL...
WE AS A NATION SHOULD REACT IN A UNITED MANNER." AN
AGREEMENT AMONG ALL LITTORAL AND NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES
IN THE REGION WOULD HAVE TO BE BUILT ON THIS SUBJECT, HE
REPORTEDLY SAID.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, OUR PRESS AND PARLIAMENTARY CONTACTS
SEEM TO FEEL THAT THE GOI HAS INDICATED TO CONGRESS
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT THAT WHILE IT OPPOSES THE U. S.
ACTION, IT DOES NOT WISH TO REACT SO STRONGLY AS TO JEO-
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PARDIZE THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN IMPROVING INDO-U.S.
RELATIONS. FROM WHAT WE CAN TELL, THIS REINFORCED AN EXIST-
ING TENDENCY AMONG MOST OF THE CONGRESS CENTRISTS TO
LIMIT THEIR REACTION. THERE HAS BEEN NO GENERAL DEBATE
ON THE ISSUE YET IN EITHER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT, AND MANY
CONGRESS MEMBERS SPEAKING THIS WEEK IN THE DEBATE ON
THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS EITHER FAILED TO MENTION THE U. S.
DECISION OR MENTIONED IT ONLY IN THE SAME TERMS AS THE

FOREIGN MINISTER.

4. THE CRITICS: ON THE LEFT, THE STRONGEST OPPOSITION TO THE US ACTION COMES FROM THE PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST PARTY AND FROM THE PRO-COMMUNISTS WITHIN THE CONGRESS PARTY. ON THE RIGHT, IT COMES FROM THE HINDU NATIONALIST JANA SANGH. THE LEFTISTS PAINT OUR DECISION AS PART OF A CONTINUING U. S. EFFORT TO "DESTABILIZE" THE REGION, LINKING IT TO ALLEGED CIA EFFORTS TO SUBVERT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND TO U. S. ACTIVITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE JANA SANGH HAS BEEN EQUALLY OUTSPOKEN, BUT AS THE MOST ANTI-PAKISTAN GROUP IN INDIA, IT HAS BASED ITS CRITICISM ON THE SUPPORT THE U. S. ACTION REPRESENTS FOR AN AGGRESSIVE PAKISTAN. NOT WANTING TO BE LEFT BEHIND, HOWEVER, ALL PARTIES SPONSORED THE FEBRUARY 27 SEMINAR. JAYA PRAKASH NARAYAN JOINED THE OUTCRY WITH A MESSAGE TO THE SEMINAR WHICH TERMED THE U. S. ACTION A STEP "IN THE DIRECTION OF DESTABILIZING THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZATION IN THE SUBCONTINENT" -- A PROCESS OF WHICH HE HISTORICALLY HAS BEEN A STRONG SUPPORTER. THE CRITICISM OF THE U. S. DECISION BY THE JANA SANGH AND BY J. P. NARAYAN MAY ALSO HELP THEM COUNTER CRITICISM THAT THEY ARE PRO-AMERICAN OR EVEN TOOLS OF THE CIA. (NEW DELHI 2513).

5. BEHIND THE RHETORIC IS A SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE U. S. DECISION ON PAKISTAN -- A CONCERN THAT IT WILL MAKE BHUTTO MORE BELLIGERENT IN HIS DEALINGS WITH INDIAN AND AFGHANISTAN AND BOLDER IN USING REPRESSIVE MEASURES TO DEAL WITH HIS CRITICS WITHIN PAKISTAN. THERE IS ALSO WORRY THAT INDIA WILL NOW HAVE TO SPEND MORE ON ARMS ITSELF, THEREBY REDUCING THE AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES. AND MEA OFFICIAL TOLD US, AND SOME PRESS COMMENTATORS ALSO SAY THE GOI GREATLY

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FEARS THAT A COUNTRY SUCH AS IRAN WILL NOW BE ABLE TO "UNLOAD" ITS AGING ARSENAL ON PAKISTAN AT TOKEN PRICES.

6. THE MODERATES: THIS GROUP INCLUDES MANY WITH NO STAKE IN ANTI-AMERICANISM OR WITH A DIRECT INTEREST IN BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND INDIA. IN THE LATTER CATEGORY WOULD BE NOT ONLY BUSINESSMEN WHO STAND TO BENEFIT FROM BETTER RELATIONS, BUT ALSO CONGRESS MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHO OPPOSE THE LEFTISTS IN FACTIONAL INTRAPARTY DISPUTES AND WHO WILL THEREFORE LOSE IF THE PRO-COMMUNISTS ARE STRENGTHENED AS A RESULT OF A VIOLENTLY ANTI-AMERICAN REACTION. THESE MODERATES ARGUE THAT INDIA SHOULD TAKE A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE AND THAT INDIA IS A STRONG COUNTRY WHICH IF NECESSARY CAN MAKE ITSELF EVEN STRONGER. BEHIND THEIR THINKING MAY BE THE REALIZATION

THAT NORMALIZATION WITH PAKISTAN HAS MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS AND CAN BE CONTINUED IN SPITE OF THE U. S. DECISION AND BHUTTO'S REACTION TO THE KASHMIR AGREEMENT.

7. REACTION IS STRONGEST IN NORTHERN INDIA, PARTICULARLY IN THE PUNJAB. REACTION IN CALCUTTA, MADRAS AND BOMBAY HAS ALL BEEN MILD SO FAR. NOWHERE ARE INDIAN CONTACTS GOING OUT OF THE WAY TO RAISE THE ISSUE WITH US IN A CONTENTIOUS FASHION. INDIAN MILITARY OFFICERS WE HAVE SEEN ARE UNHAPPY BUT NOT APOLECTIC ABOUT THE DECISION-- THEY BELIEVE INDIA CAN TAKE IT IN STRIDE. EVEN TIMES OF INDIA WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT M. V. KAMATH, IN PRIVATE SPEECHES IN BOMBAY COMMENTED THAT THE GOI HAD OVERREACTED. ALTHOUGH WE HAD A DEMONSTRATION LAST FRIDAY, JUST BEFORE THE ANNOUNCEMENT, THE EMBASSY HAD HAD NONE SINCE. THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW SMALL DEMONSTRATIONS BEFORE THE CONSULATIONS AND BOTH THE CONSULATES AND WE ANTICIPATE MORE IN THE NEXT WEEK OR TWO. POLICE PROTECTION HAS BEEN FULLY ADEQUATE.

8. CONGENS BOMBAY, CALCUTTA AND MADRAS HAVE ALL CONTRICUTED TO THIS MESSAGE.
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